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REARRANGEMENT OF THE ORIENTAL COLLECTIONS

IN furthering a plan whereby the various collections illustrative of the arts of the Far East may be kept in close relation with the unrivaled collection of Chinese porcelains lent to the Museum by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, and the Heber R. Bishop collection of jade, the galleries of the second floor, which lead to or open out from the Morgan Room, have been reserved for the textiles, arms, armor, lacquers, bronzes, woodwork and ceramics of China, Japan, and the lesser art centers of the Orient.

Thus, from the comprehensive collection of Japanese arms and armor exhibited in Gallery 8 we pass to Gallery 1, the center of which is filled with various examples of Japanese lacquer, wood, and basketwork, part of the collection bequeathed to the Museum by Stephen Whitney Phoenix in 1881. On the left of this is the collection of Japanese swords, each one remarkable for some quality either of age, provenance, decoration, or, as is generally the case, for a happy blending of the three. Here are examples of such rare metal workers as Kaneon, 995 A.D.; of Kumuaka and Tango Nawomichi of the thirteenth century; of Sukesaka, of Bizen, Kuniyoshi, and Kanchira of the early sixteenth century. A noticeable detail of these swords is the simplicity of the blade as opposed to the lavish decoration expended upon the sword furniture. As to the decoration lavished upon the handles, scabbards, guards, and other parts, a study of the collection shows that the Japanese artist-craftsman was conscientiousness itself. Here are designs of surpassing richness, yet never overstepping those canons of good taste which seem part and parcel of the Japanese artist's equipment.

Upon the right of the Japanese lacquers, and leading immediately to the Morgan Room, are arranged two collections of Japanese ceramics, one lent to the Museum by

Mr. and Mrs. V. Everit Macy and the other a collection presented by Mr. Samuel Coleman in 1904. The wall cases in Gallery 7, immediately to the left, are devoted to the major part of the rich collection of Japanese pottery and porcelains presented to the Museum by the late Charles Stewart Smith. Along the sides of this gallery are flat cases containing selected examples of Japanese textiles of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Here we may note that the Oriental, working with wooden tools, has attained results which fairly equal, if they do not at times surpass, the work of his Western rival.

Galleries 2 and 5 have been assigned to the arts of China. Along the eastern and northern walls of these galleries have been arranged the large collection of Chinese pottery and porcelains purchased from the late Samuel P. Avery in 1879. The aisle at the southern end of Gallery 5 is devoted to Chinese bronzes, cloisonné, and Pekin enamels, and woodwork. In the center of this gallery is the lacquered, painted, and gilded twelvefold screen, the gift of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, dating from the end of the seventeenth century. On either side are inlaid teakwood cabinets and in the niches near by—a temporary arrangement only—a rare collection of Chinese idols in gilded bronze and wood, dating from the Sung and Ming periods, lent to the Museum by Mr. Israel Putnam. In aisle cases at the north end of Gallery 5 are displayed cinnabar lacquers—part of the Phoenix bequest; some remarkable carved rhinoceros horn cups—the gift of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, and a collection of carved jade and rock-crystals—the gift of Mrs. F. O. Matthiessen in memory of her husband. The walls are decorated with Chinese rugs of the K'ang-hsi and Ch'ien-lung periods and the southern side of the aisle with selected examples of Chinese brocades and velvets. In the wall cases are the late examples of Chinese porcelains belonging to the Avery Collection.

G. C. P.